



# Australian Bureau of Statistics

## 1288.0 - Standards for Labour Force Statistics, 1996

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## Summary

### About this Release

Specifies ABS standards for the collection, processing, storage and dissemination of statistics on labour force variables. Topics covered include the ABS recommended definitions of concepts, classification criteria, code structures, questionnaire modules and output categories. Issues related to these standards are also discussed.

This publication has been converted from older electronic formats and does not necessarily have the same appearance and functionality as later releases.

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**Note:** For a definition of **statistical standards** see the introductory document for the **Standards for Social, Labour and Demographic Variables**.

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# Abbreviations

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<b>ABS</b>	Australian Bureau of Statistics
<b>Cat. no.</b>	Catalogue number of an ABS publication
<b>DEWR</b>	Department of Employment and Workplace Relations
<b>DFACS</b>	Department of Family and Community Services
<b>ICLS</b>	International Conference of Labour Statisticians
<b>ICSE</b>	International Classification of Status in Employment
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organisation
<b>LFS</b>	Labour Force Survey
<b>NILF</b>	Not in the Labour Force
<b>PSO</b>	Population Survey Operations, a section of the Australian Bureau of Statistics.
<b>SE</b>	Standard Error
<b>SNA</b>	A System of National Accounts (Revision 4, UN/IMF/OECD/EUROSTAT/World Bank, New York, 1993)
<b>SSS</b>	Special Supplementary Survey. These are ABS surveys specially designed to target a specific segment of the population and collect detailed statistical data not collected in the normal household surveys.

## Glossary of terms

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### GLOSSARY

The definitions in this Glossary relate to the maximum question set for the monthly Labour Force Survey. Information on other standard question sets can be found in The Labour Force Framework, Labour Force Status, Status in Employment, Hours Worked, Full-Time/Part-Time Status and Duration of Unemployment. Detailed information on the labour force framework and definitions used in ABS surveys is available in **Labour Statistics: Concepts, Sources and Methods** (cat. no. 6102.0).

#### Actively Looking For Work

Actively Looking For Work includes: writing, telephoning or applying in person to an employer for work; answering an advertisement for a job; checking factory notice boards or the touchscreens at Centrelink offices; being registered with Centrelink as a jobseeker; checking or registering with any other employment agency; advertising or tendering for work; and contacting friends or relatives.

#### Actual Hours of Work

Actual hours of work is the amount of time a person actually spent at work in the reference week. The time includes all paid and unpaid overtime but excludes hours paid for but not worked (such as paid annual leave or public holidays), meal breaks and time spent on travel to and from work. Actual hours worked (for a specific reference period) may differ from usual hours worked due to illness, vacation, strike, overtime work, a change of job or similar reasons.

#### Contributing Family Worker

A contributing family worker is a person who works without pay in an economic enterprise operated by a relative. (This category was formerly entitled unpaid family helper).

#### Currently Economically Active

The currently economically active population is also referred to as the labour force. The labour force is conceptually equivalent to the labour supply available for the production of economic goods and services (as defined for SNA purposes) during a specified (short) reference period (eg. one week). For more detail see **Labour Statistics: Concepts, Sources and Methods** (cat. no. 6102.0).

#### Duration of Unemployment

Duration of Unemployment is defined as the elapsed period to the end of the reference week since a person began looking for work, or since a person last worked for two weeks or more, whichever is shorter. Brief periods of work (of less than two weeks) since the person began looking for work are disregarded.

#### Employed

Employed persons comprise all those aged 15 years and over who, during the reference week:

- worked for one hour or more for pay, profit, commission or payment in kind, in a job or business or on a farm (comprising 'Employees', 'Employers' and 'Own Account Workers') or

- worked for one hour or more without pay in a family business or on a farm (ie. contributing family workers) or
- were employees who had a job but were not at work and were:
  - away from work for less than four weeks up to the end of the reference week or
  - away from work for more than four weeks up to the end of the reference week and received pay for some or all of the four week period to the end of the reference week or
  - away from work as a standard work or shift arrangement or
  - on strike or locked out or
  - on workers' compensations and expected to return to their job or
- were employers or own account workers who had a job, business or farm, but were not at work.

Note: As stated at the beginning of the Glossary, this definition is consistent with the maximum question set for the Labour Force Survey.

### **Employee**

An employee is a person who works for a public or private employer and receives remuneration in wages, salary, a retainer fee from their employer while working on a commission basis, tips, piece-rates, or payment in kind; or a person who operates his or her own incorporated enterprise with or without hiring employees.

### **Employer**

An employer is a person who operates his or her own unincorporated economic enterprise or engages independently in a profession or trade, and hires one or more employees.

### **Full-time Workers**

Full-time workers are employed persons who usually worked 35 hours or more a week (in all jobs) and those who, although usually working less than 35 hours a week, worked 35 hours or more during the reference week.

### **Labour Force**

For any group, persons who were employed or unemployed, as defined.

### **Labour Force Status**

Labour Force Status is a classification of the civilian population aged 15 years and over into employed, unemployed or not in the labour force, as defined. The definitions conform closely to the international standards adopted by the International Conferences of Labour Statisticians.

### **Main job**

The main job is defined as the job in which the person usually works most hours.

### **Own Account Worker**

Own Account Worker is a person who operates his or her own unincorporated economic enterprise or engages independently in a profession or trade and hires no employees (this category was formerly entitled self employed).

### **Part-time Workers**

Part-time Workers are employed persons who usually worked less than 35 hours a week (in all jobs) and either did so during the reference week, or were not at work in the reference week.

## **Persons Not in the Labour Force**

Persons Not in the Labour Force are those persons who were not in the categories employed or unemployed as defined. For more detail see Labour Force Status - Classification and Coding, paragraph 27.

## **Status in Employment**

Status in Employment refers to employed persons classified by whether they were employees, employers, own account workers, or contributing family workers.

## **Unemployed**

Unemployed persons are those aged 15 years and over who were not employed during the reference week, and:

- had actively looked for full-time or part-time work at any time in the four weeks up to the end of the reference week and
- were available for work in the reference week or
- were waiting to start a new job within four weeks from the end of the reference week and could have started in the reference week if the job had been available then.

Note: As stated at the beginning of the Glossary, this definition is consistent with the maximum question set for the Labour Force Survey.

## **Unemployed Looking for Full-time Work**

Includes unemployed persons who:

- actively looked for full-time work and were available for work in the reference week or
- actively looked for work and were not available for work in the reference week because they were waiting to start a new full-time job.

## **Unemployed Looking for Part-time Work**

Includes unemployed persons who:

- actively looked for part-time work only, and were available for work in the reference week or
- actively looked for work and were not available for work in the reference week because they were waiting to start a new part-time job.

## **Usual Hours of Work**

Usual hours of work refers to a typical period rather than to a specified reference period. The concept of usual hours applies both to persons at work and to persons temporarily absent from work, and is defined as the hours worked during a typical week. The time includes all regular paid and unpaid overtime.

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## **References**

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- Australian Bureau of Statistics, Standards for Labour Force Statistics, Cat. no. 1288.0, ABS, Canberra.

- Australian Bureau of Statistics, Labour Statistics: Concepts, Sources and Methods, Cat. no. 6102.0, ABS, Canberra, 2001.
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- Report of the Fifteenth International Conference of Labour Statisticians, Geneva, ILO, 1993.
- Revision of the International Classification of Status in Employment, ILO, Geneva, 1993 - Paper presented to the 15th International Conference of Labour Statisticians.

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## The Labour Force Framework

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## Introduction

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### INTRODUCTION

1. The labour force is conceptually equivalent to the supply of labour for economic production. It is a measure of the economically active population, and the underlying concept of economic activity is compatible with that used in the United Nations System of National Accounts.

2. The labour force framework classifies the in-scope population into three mutually exclusive categories as at a given moment in time: employed; unemployed and not in the labour force. The employed and unemployed categories together make up the labour force which gives a measure of the number of persons contributing to, or willing to contribute to,

the supply of labour at that time (the currently economically active population). The third category (not in the labour force) represents the currently inactive population.

3. Labour force concepts and definitions used by the ABS align closely with the standards and guidelines as defined by the International Labour Organisation, (ILO). The Australian labour force framework is detailed in **Labour Statistics: Concepts Sources and Methods** (cat.no. 6102.0). The scope of the Labour Force Survey and key concepts measured by the survey are outlined below.

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## Underlying concepts

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### UNDERLYING CONCEPTS

#### LABOUR FORCE STATUS

6. The Labour Force Survey classifies the in-scope population according to their labour force status (employed, unemployed or not in the labour force). Labour force status is derived by asking a series of questions about a person's work-related activities and availability for work in the reference period. The criteria for determining a person's labour force status are (broadly) as follows:

- whether a person has work (that is, economic work for which payment is received such as wages, salary, profit, commission or payment in kind. Unpaid activities such as unpaid domestic work and volunteer community services are excluded); and
- whether those who do not have work are:
  - actively looking for work; and
  - available to start work.

7. The determination of labour force status from these criteria is as follows:

- a person who meets the first criterion is classified as employed and hence in the labour force (currently economically active)
- a person who meets all of the subsequent criteria (i.e. without work, actively looking for work, and available to start work) is classified as unemployed and hence in the labour force (currently economically active) and
- a person not classified as employed or unemployed is classified as not in the labour force (not currently economically active).

8. Reflecting these broad principles, the definitions of employed, unemployed and not in the labour force used by the ABS are outlined below.

9. **Employed** are defined as persons aged 15 and over who, during the reference week:

- worked for one hour or more for pay, profit, commission or payment in kind, in a job or business or on a farm (comprising employees, employers and own account workers)  
or

- worked for one hour or more without pay in a family business or on a farm (i.e. contributing family workers) or
- were employees who had a job but were not at work and were:
  - away from work for less than four weeks up to the end of the reference week or
  - away from work for more than four weeks up to the end of the reference week and received pay for some or all of the four week period to the end of the reference week or
  - away from work as a standard work or shift arrangement or
  - on strike or locked out or
  - on workers' compensation and expected to be returning to their job; or
- were employers or own account workers, who had a job, business or farm, but were not at work.

10. **Unemployed** are defined as persons aged 15 and over who were not employed during the reference week, and:

- had actively looked for full-time or part-time work at any time in the four weeks up to the end of the reference week and:
  - were available for work in the reference week or
  - were waiting to start a new job within four weeks from the end of the reference week, and could have started in the reference week if the job had been available then.

11. Actively looking for work includes: writing, telephoning or applying in person to an employer for work; answering an advertisement for a job; checking factory notice boards or the touchscreens at Centrelink offices; being registered with Centrelink as a jobseeker; checking or registering with any other employment agency; advertising or tendering for work; and contacting friends or relatives.

12. **Persons not in the labour force** are defined as persons aged 15 and over who were not employed or unemployed, as defined. They include: persons who were keeping house (unpaid), retired, voluntarily inactive, or permanently unable to work; persons in institutions (boarding schools, hospitals, gaols, sanatoriums, etc.); members of contemplative religious orders; and persons whose only activity during the reference week was jury service or unpaid voluntary work for a charitable organisation.

13. Persons working without pay in an economic enterprise operated by a related person are termed contributing family workers. They are classified as 'employed' if they worked one hour or more in the reference week, and as 'unemployed' or 'not in the labour force' if they did not work during the reference week.

## OTHER LABOUR FORCE CHARACTERISTICS

14. The labour force survey also collects information on certain characteristics of persons in employment and unemployment as well as persons not in the labour force. The measurement and classification of labour force characteristics are detailed in **Labour Statistics: Concepts Sources and Methods** (cat. no. 6102.0). Some of the key measurements and classifications used in the Labour Force Survey are listed below.



- Employment related characteristics include:
  - status in employment in main job (employee, employer, own account worker or contributing family worker)
  - actual hours worked in all jobs and in main jobs
  - usual hours worked in main job
  - full-time or part-time status
  - underemployment
  - occupation and industry of main job and
  - job tenure.
- Unemployment related characteristics include:
  - whether looking for full-time or part-time work
  - full-time/part-time status of last job
  - reason for ceasing last job
  - duration of unemployment and
  - occupation and industry of last job.
- Characteristics of persons not in the labour force include:
  - whether looking for work (actively looking but not available for work, not actively looking for work)
  - marginal attachment to the labour force
  - permanently unable to work and
  - persons in institutions.

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## Collection methods

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### COLLECTION METHODS

19. Three collection methodologies for labour force data are detailed below:

- question modules used by the ABS in household based surveys. There are two versions of the Labour Force Module in collections conducted by trained interviewers. The extended version (**maximum set**) is used in the ABS' Labour Force Survey and Monthly Population Survey and a shorter module (**minimum set**) is used in all other relevant ABS collections which use trained interviewers
- a **self enumerated module**, consisting of five questions, based on the questions used in the 1996 Census and suitable for use in administrative data collections conducted by agencies other than the ABS and
- a **single question module**, used in administrative data collections where it is difficult to implement the five question self enumerated module. It should be noted that this single question module is not used in ABS statistical collections.

### HOUSEHOLD BASED SURVEYS CONDUCTED BY INTERVIEW

20. The standard ABS modules for household based surveys where an interviewer is used are:

## Maximum Set

21. The full Labour Force questionnaire module is too long to reproduce here but is that used in the current Labour Force Survey. Full details can be found in **Information Paper: Questionnaires used in the Labour Force Survey, 6232.0**.

## Minimum Set

22. The Minimum Set recommended for household based surveys comprises fifteen questions. Sequencing will ensure that all fifteen questions will never be asked of any individual. For the vast majority, only five questions will be asked for those who have a job or eight for those who are unemployed and four for those who are not in the labour force. The additional questions, asked of a small but significant minority of respondents, are necessary to ensure a sufficiently accurate measure of the concepts. Although there are only fifteen questions, they are numbered 1-17 as two introductory statements to be read out by the interviewer, have been given question numbers in line with ABS Population Survey Operations conventions. If data on Status in Employment are not required, questions 5-11 can be omitted. The recommended questions are:

### MINIMUM SET OF QUESTIONS WHEN INTERVIEWER USED - Q1 to Q17

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**Q.1.** I WOULD LIKE TO ASK ABOUT LAST WEEK, THAT IS, THE WEEK STARTING SUNDAY THE .... AND ENDING (LAST SATURDAY THE .... /YESTERDAY.)

---

**Q.2.** LAST WEEK DID .... DO ANY WORK AT ALL IN A JOB, BUSINESS OR FARM?

Yes	Q	<b>Go to Q.5</b>
No	Q	
Permanently unable to work	Q	<b>No More Questions</b>
Permanently not intending to work (if aged 65 + only)	Q	<b>No More Questions</b>

---

**Q.3.** LAST WEEK DID .... DO ANY WORK WITHOUT PAY IN A FAMILY BUSINESS?

Yes	Q	<b>Go to Q.5</b>
No	Q	
Permanently not intending to work (if aged 65 + only)	Q	<b>No More Questions</b>

---

**Q.4.** DID ... HAVE A JOB, BUSINESS OR FARM THAT ... WAS AWAY FROM BECAUSE OF HOLIDAYS, SICKNESS OR ANY OTHER REASON?

Yes	Q	
No	Q	<b>Go to Q.13</b>
Permanently not intending to work (if aged 65 + only)	Q	<b>No More Questions</b>

---

**Q.5.** DID ... HAVE MORE THAN ONE JOB OR BUSINESS LAST WEEK?

Yes	Q	
No	Q	<b>Go to Q.7</b>

---

**Q.6.** THE NEXT FEW QUESTIONS ARE ABOUT THE JOB OR BUSINESS IN WHICH ... USUALLY WORKS THE MOST HOURS.

---

**Q.7.** DOES ... WORK FOR AN EMPLOYER, OR IN ... OWN BUSINESS

Employer	Q	
Own business	Q	<b>Go to Q.10</b>
Other/Uncertain	Q	<b>Go to Q.9</b>

---

**Q.8.**

IS ... PAID A WAGE OR SALARY, OR SOME OTHER FORM OF PAYMENT?

Wage/Salary

q

**Go to Q.12**

Other/Uncertain

q

**Q.9.**

WHAT ARE ... (WORKING/PAYMENT) ARRANGEMENTS?

Unpaid voluntary work

q

**Go to Q.13**

Contractor/Subcontractor

q

Own business/Partnership

q

Commission only

q

Commission with retainer

q

**Go to Q.12**

In a family business without pay

q

**Go to Q.12**

Payment in kind

q

**Go to Q.12**

Paid by the piece/item produced

q

**Go to Q.12**

Wage/salary earner

q

**Go to Q.12**

Other

q

**Go to Q.12**

**Q.10.** DOES ... HAVE EMPLOYEES (IN THAT BUSINESS)?

Yes

q

No

q

**Q.11.** IS THAT BUSINESS INCORPORATED?

Yes

q

No

q

**Q.12.** HOW MANY HOURS DOES ... USUALLY WORK EACH WEEK IN (THAT JOB/THAT BUSINESS/ALL ... JOBS)?

1 hour or more

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

**No More Questions**

Less than 1 hour/no hours

q

**Insert occupation questions if required**

**Insert industry questions if required**

**Q.13.** AT ANY TIME DURING THE LAST 4 WEEKS HAS ... BEEN LOOKING FOR FULL-TIME OR PART-TIME WORK?

Yes, full-time work

q

Yes, part-time work

q

No

q

**No More Questions**

**Q.14.** AT ANY TIME IN THE LAST 4 WEEKS HAS ...

WRITTEN, PHONED OR APPLIED IN PERSON TO AN

q

EMPLOYER FOR WORK?

ANSWERED AN ADVERTISEMENT FOR A JOB?

q

LOOKED IN NEWSPAPERS?

Yes

q

No

q

CHECKED FACTORY NOTICE BOARDS, OR USED THE TOUCHSCREENS AT CENTRELINK OFFICES?

q

AT ANY TIME IN THE LAST 4 WEEKS HAS ...

BEEN REGISTERED WITH CENTRELINK AS A

q

JOBSEEKER?

CHECKED OR REGISTERED WITH AN EMPLOYMENT AGENCY?

q

DONE ANYTHING ELSE TO FIND A JOB?

Advertised or tendered for work	q	
Contacted friends/relatives	q	
Other	q	No More Questions
Only looked in newspapers	q	No More Questions
None of these	q	No More Questions

**Q.15.** IF ... HAD FOUND A JOB COULD ... HAVE STARTED WORK LAST WEEK?

Yes	q	
No	q	End
Don't know	q	

The 'don't know' response category should be treated the same way as the 'yes' response category. That is they should be classified as unemployed, assuming they have met the active job search criteria. This is consistent with the treatment in the Labour Force Survey.

Remaining questions are only required if Duration of Unemployment is needed for output or to derive the long term unemployed.

**Q.16.** WHEN DID ... BEGIN LOOKING FOR WORK?

Enter Date	
Less than 2 years ago	...../...../..... DD MM YY
2 years to less than 5 years ago	...../..... MM YY
5 years or more ago	..... YY
Did not look for work	q

**Q.17.** WHEN DID ... LAST WORK FOR 2 WEEKS OR MORE?

Enter Date	
Less than 2 years ago	...../...../..... DD MM YY
2 years or more ago	...../..... MM YY
5 years or more ago	..... YY
Has never worked (for two weeks or more)	q No More Questions

## SELF ENUMERATION SET

23. The recommended module of 5 questions for self enumerated collections, based on the questions used in the 2001 Census is:

### QUESTIONS FOR SELF ENUMERATION - Q1 TO Q5

**Q.1.** Last week, did you have a full-time or part-time job of any kind?

(A job means any type of work including casual or temporary work or part-time work, if it was for one hour or more.)

	Mark one box only.
Yes, worked for payment or profit	q
Yes, but absent on holidays, on paid leave, on strike or temporarily stood down	q
Yes, unpaid work in a family business	q
Yes, other unpaid work	q Now go to Q4

No, did not have job

q

Now go to Q4

---

**Q.2. In the main job held **last week**, were you:**

(If you had more than one job last week then 'main job' refers to the job in which you usually work the most hours.)

Mark one box only.

A wage or salary earner?

q

Conducting own business

With employees?

q

Conducting own business

Without employees?

q

A helper not receiving wages?

q

---

**Insert occupation and industry questions if required**

---

**Q.3. Last week, how many hours did you work in all jobs?**

(Subtract any time off, add any overtime or extra time worked.)

None

q

Hours worked

|\_|\_|

---

**Insert journey to work question if required**

---

**Q.4. Did you actively look for work at any time in the **last four weeks**?**

(Examples of actively looking for work include:

being registered with Centrelink as a jobseeker; checking or registering with any other employment agency; writing, telephoning or applying in person to an employer for work; or advertising for work.)

No, I did not look for work

q

**No More Questions**

Yes, I looked for full-time work

q

Yes, I looked for part-time work

q

---

**Q.5. If you had found a job, could you have started work **last week**?**

Yes

q

No

q

---

**Note:** For unemployed persons this question set also differentiates between those looking for full-time work and those looking for part-time work.

## **SINGLE QUESTION MODULE**

24. It is recognised that the standard ABS self enumerated question module may be difficult to implement in some administrative settings where there is a requirement to collect information on labour force activities from clients for client profiling or service provision analysis. If this is the case, the following single question is suggested to promote comparability of data collected as a product of administrative activities of that nature.

25. It should be noted that the single question module is **not** an ABS standard and is not used in ABS statistical collections. As this question is reliant on the respondent or client's own perception of his or her labour force activities and on that person's understanding of the words for labour force concepts used in the question, its accuracy is very limited. It may nevertheless be useful for agencies which require a broad understanding of the labour force profile of their clientele but cannot use the five question approach of the ABS standard.

**SINGLE QUESTION MODULE** (for administrative data collections)

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**Q.1.** Of the following categories, which best describes your current employment status?

Mark one box only.

Full-Time employee	<input type="radio"/>
Part-Time employee	<input type="radio"/>
Self-employed - not employing others	<input type="radio"/>
Self-employed - employing others	<input type="radio"/>
Employed - unpaid worker in a family business	<input type="radio"/>
Unemployed - seeking full-time work	<input type="radio"/>
Unemployed - seeking part-time work	<input type="radio"/>
Not employed - not seeking employment	<input type="radio"/>

---

**Note** that if data on the full-time/part-time status of the unemployed are not required, the two unemployed categories may be combined as "Unemployed - seeking full-time or part-time work. It is important to emphasise in the question that to be unemployed one has to be looking for work.

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### SCOPE OF THE POPULATION

4. The scope of the population for which Labour Force Survey estimates are made is confined to the civilian, usually resident population aged 15 years and over, thus excluding:

- Australian defence personnel
- diplomatic personnel of overseas governments, customarily excluded from census and estimated population counts
- persons who are usually resident in other countries and are temporarily residing in Australia (that is, the total duration of their stay in Australia is less than 12 months) and
- members of non-Australian defence forces (and their dependants) stationed in Australia.

5. The exclusion of Australian defence personnel from the Labour Force Survey results from practical collection difficulties and low numbers involved. Where an estimate is required of the total labour force, for example in international comparisons collated by the ILO, survey estimates are supplemented by administrative counts of the defence forces.

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## The Labour Force Module

## LABOUR FORCE MODULE

15. The Labour Force Survey is the official source for Australian employment and unemployment statistics. It uses a comprehensive and detailed set of questions to precisely measure the numbers and certain characteristics of persons in employment and unemployment, that is the currently economically active population. The 'maximum set' of questions, as used in the Labour Force Survey, are presented in **Information Paper: Questionnaires used in the Labour Force Survey, 2001** (cat. no. 6232.0).

16. In other household surveys, where labour force status is used as an explanatory or classificatory variable, it is generally not practical to determine employment and unemployment as precisely as in the Labour Force Survey. A shorter 'minimum set' of questions is used in most other ABS household surveys to produce estimates of the currently economically active population. While aggregates produced from these other surveys are designed to be consistent with the international concepts of employment and unemployment, the treatment of certain small population groups is simpler than that used in the Labour Force Survey. Consequently, there are some differences between estimates produced from the Labour Force Survey and those produced from surveys using the reduced modules.

17. The minimum question set is presented in the following section, Collection Methods. Both a reduced questionnaire module for use in personal interviews, and a self enumerated questionnaire module are included in the standard, along with a single question module that may be used in administrative data collections.

18. The development of a standard for questionnaire modules collecting labour force data (see The Labour Force Framework - Collection Methods), and for associated labour force output, ensures comparable and compatible labour force data across a variety of collections. This standard addresses definitions, classifications, coding structures, questionnaire modules and output categories to be used in household interviewer based and self-enumerated collections. The standard also discusses the primary differences between the Labour Force Survey definitions of employment and unemployment, and related labour force characteristics as obtained from the 'maximum set' of questions, and the definitions used by other household surveys, as obtained from the 'minimum set' of questions.

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## Labour Force Status

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## Introduction

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1. An important requirement of an economic and social understanding of a society is to be able to measure the labour force characteristics of the population and the changes which occur over time. The monthly Labour Force Survey (LFS) and its associated supplementary surveys is the basic and most important source of information about the Labour Force. However, this information is further supplemented by information obtained from the 5 yearly Censuses, the various Special Supplementary Surveys (SSSs) and employer based surveys.

2. Labour force characteristics, when cross-classified with other social, economic and demographic topics, can provide 'all about' data on a particular topic, issue or population group and the information ultimately customised for informed decision making and planning, policy formulation and monitoring, social research and analysis and programme provision and evaluation.

3. Household interviewer based surveys are the most common ABS collection vehicles for a variety of topics, but there are limits to the number and detail of labour force data collection items that can be incorporated. The full or maximum labour force questionnaire is too comprehensive and detailed to be used in a survey that is focused on a particular topic. To overcome this problem a minimum question set has been developed for collections where labour force variables are used as 'explanatory variables' and not intended to produce intrinsic labour force estimates.

4. The 'minimum set' of questions used in household surveys collects information based on the key labour force variables of:

- Labour force status
- Employed persons: status in employment
- Employed persons: hours worked
- Full-time/part-time status: employed persons  
unemployed persons (whether looking for full-time or part-time work)
- Unemployed persons: duration of unemployment.

5. A separate standard has been developed for each of these key labour force variables. This standard deals with labour force status.

6. In all household based surveys undertaking to collect data on labour force activity, labour force status must first be established. Question sequencing within the minimum set of questions ensures that respondents are correctly sequenced to questions relevant to their labour force status. Employed persons will be sequenced to questions collecting status in employment, hours worked and full-time/part-time status; unemployed persons will be sequenced to questions about whether they were looking for full-time or part-time work and duration of unemployment

## Underlying concepts



## NAME OF THE VARIABLE

7. The name of the variable is 'Labour Force Status'.

## DEFINITION OF THE VARIABLE

### Nominal definition

8. Labour Force Status is a classification of the civilian population aged 15 years and over into employed, unemployed or not in the labour force. The definitions conform closely to the international standards adopted by the International Conferences of Labour Statisticians.

9. 'Labour Force Status' is an attribute of the counting unit 'Person'.

### Operational definition

10. 'Labour Force Status' is measured by establishing whether a person aged 15 years or over is employed, unemployed or not in the labour force (according to the relevant definitions) during a specified reference week.

11. 'Labour Force Status' is established according to a set of priority rules whereby employment takes precedence over unemployment and unemployment over economic inactivity. The priority rules provide unambiguous labour force measures, regardless of other activities that may be undertaken at the same time. For example, a person at work may also be actively seeking other employment; they are currently contributing to economic production and are therefore classed as employed, notwithstanding their job search.

12. The broad principles for the determination of labour force status are outlined in Labour Force Framework: Underlying Concepts. A more detailed discussion of the labour force framework and concepts is presented in **Labour Statistics: Concepts, Sources and Methods** (cat. no 6102.0).

## COMPARISON BETWEEN THE LABOUR FORCE SURVEY AND OTHER HOUSEHOLD SURVEYS

13. In comparison with the estimates of labour force aggregates from the Labour Force Survey, the reduced questionnaire module recommended for use in personal interviews results in higher estimates of employed, lower estimates of unemployed and higher estimates of persons not in the labour force. This arises from the simplified treatment of certain categories of persons:

- the reduced questionnaire module for personal interviews does not ask respondents who were not available to start work the reasons they were not available during the reference week. Therefore, the reduced questionnaire module does not identify persons who looked for work in the four weeks to the end of the reference week but were not available to start work in the reference week because they were waiting to start a new job within four weeks from the end of the reference week (and could have started in the reference week if the job had been available then). Using the reduced questionnaire module such persons are classified as not in the labour force rather than as unemployed (about 1% of unemployed);
- in the Labour Force Survey, persons on workers' compensation 'last week' and not

returning (or who do not know if they will be returning to work), persons working without pay in a family business (contributing family workers) who are away from work, and persons away from work for four weeks or more without pay, are classified as either unemployed or not in the labour force. Where the reduced questionnaire module is used, all persons absent from work, but who usually work one hour or more a week, are classified as employed (about 0.1% of employed).

14. The self-enumerated questionnaire module also produces different estimates of employment, unemployment and not in the labour force, compared with the Labour Force Survey questionnaire. Some differences result from the shortened set of questions which, like the questions recommended for use in personal interview, cannot determine labour force status as precisely as the Labour Force Survey does. Other differences result from the self-enumerated nature of the questions and the inevitable differences in interpretation among respondents. As a result, labour force status from the self-enumerated questionnaire module is best used as an explanatory variable to explain other phenomena, rather than for detailed analysis of the labour force itself. The Census of Population and Housing uses the self-enumerated questionnaire module.

15. More detailed discussion of the differences between the Labour Force Survey and other Household Surveys is presented in **Labour Statistics: Concepts, Sources and Methods** (cat. no 6102.0).

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## Classification and coding

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### SCOPE OF THE VARIABLE

16. The variable Labour Force Status is applicable to all persons in the **usually resident civilian** population, aged 15 years and over. For more detail see The Labour Force Framework - Scope of the population.

17. In the Labour Force Survey members of the Australian permanent defence forces are excluded from the scope of the survey.

### THE CLASSIFICATION CRITERIA

18. The criteria used in classifying units in the classification are:

- whether a person has a job
- whether those who do not have a job are **actively** seeking work
- whether those who are actively seeking work are **available** to start work

### THE STANDARD CLASSIFICATION

19. The standard classification is a one level classification comprising three categories:

- Employed

- Unemployed
- Not in the Labour Force

20. Definitions of the above categories are detailed in Labour Force Framework - Underlying Concepts.

## THE CODE STRUCTURE

21. The code structure of the classification is:

1. Employed
2. Unemployed
3. Not in the Labour Force

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## Collection methods

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### COLLECTION METHODS

#### STANDARD QUESTION MODULE

22. Details of the full labour force questionnaire are presented in the Information paper: Questionnaires used in the **Labour Force Survey, 2001** (cat. no. 6232.0). The minimum question set is detailed in The Labour Force Framework - Collection methods.

#### Household based surveys

23. The questions relevant to measuring 'Labour Force Status' in the ABS's Household based surveys are:

- The maximum set:  
Questions 6, 18-24, 30, 34, 39, 53-59, 73-83 in the full Labour Force Survey module.  
**Information paper: Questionnaires used in the Labour Force Survey, 2001** (cat. no. 6232.0) provides detailed guidelines for deriving labour force status from the Labour Force Survey questionnaire.
- The minimum set:  
Questions 1-4, 12, 13-15 in the shortened version of the labour force module (see The Labour Force Framework - Collection methods) determine 'Labour Force Status'.

#### Self enumerated surveys

24. Questions 1, 3, 4-5 in the Self enumerated module determine 'Labour Force Status' (see The Labour Force Framework - Collection methods).

#### Single Question Module for Administrative Data Collections

25. This question is not used by the ABS. For more information regarding its recommended

use, see [The Labour Force Framework - Collection methods](#), paragraphs 23 and 24.

## STANDARD INPUT CATEGORIES AND DERIVATION OF INPUT CATEGORIES

26. The input categories are derived from the answers to the relevant questions in the questionnaire module. The input categories are:

- Employed
- Unemployed
- Not in the Labour Force

27. The principles for derivation of employed, unemployed and not in the labour force from the maximum question set is detailed in **Information Paper: Questionnaires used in the Labour Force Survey** (cat. no. 6232.0). These derivations mirror the definitions presented in *The Labour Force Framework - Underlying Concepts*.

28. Using the minimum set, labour force status is derived:

- employed persons are those who respond 'yes' to questions 2, 3, or 4 and have worked more than 1 hour as reported in Q12;
- unemployed persons are those who respond 'no' to questions 2, 3 and 4, answer 'yes' to Q13, indicate in Q14 that they have been engaged in active job search, and answer 'yes' or 'don't know' to Q15;
- persons not in the labour force are derived as the residual population, not identified as employed or unemployed as identified above.

29. Labour force status is derived from the self-enumeration question module:

- employed persons are those who answer 'yes, worked for payment or profit'; 'yes, but absent on holidays, on paid leave, on strike or temporarily stood down'; or 'yes, unpaid work in family business'.
- unemployed persons are those who answer 'yes' in Q4 and 'yes' in Q5.
- persons not in the labour force are derived as the residual population, not identified as employed or unemployed as defined above.

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## Output

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## STANDARD OUTPUT CATEGORIES

30. The standard output categories are:

- Employed
- Unemployed
- Not in the Labour Force

31. The categories 'Employed' and 'Unemployed' can be aggregated to form the total 'Labour Force'. It may be useful for certain types of social analysis to combine the categories 'unemployed' and 'not in the labour force' to form the category 'not employed'. The output label should always be footnoted with 'unemployed or not in the labour force'. The ABS does not consider it appropriate to use the category 'not employed' in relation to labour topics.

32. It should be noted that:

- the term 'self-employed' is not used in the Labour Force Survey as a standard output category. If it is used, it needs to be identified in footnotes or the glossary of the publication as the aggregation of the standard categories, Employer, Own Account Worker and Contributing Family Worker from status in employment.
- It is also possible to derive full-time/part-time status for self-employed persons in the same way that it is derived for employees.
- Also note that "Looking for Full-time work" and "Looking for Part-time work" are not necessarily required to qualify the category "Unemployed".

## **APPLICATION OF THE CLASSIFICATION TO OTHER VARIABLES**

33. The classification is used to define the scope of the other labour force variables. For more information see Labour Force Framework - Underlying Concepts, paragraph 13.

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# **Status in Employment**

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- Underlying concepts
- Classification and coding
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# **Introduction**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

1. Status in Employment is a classification of employed persons according to whether they are employees, employers, own account workers or contributing family. The status in employment classification is available from most ABS household surveys producing

estimates of employment, including the Labour Force Survey, the Census of Population and Housing, and most Special Supplementary Surveys. The status in employment classification is not available from business surveys producing estimates of employee jobs. However, estimates of employee jobs from business surveys are related to, but not the same as, estimates of persons in paid employment (employees) from household surveys see **Labour Statistics: Concepts, Sources and Methods, Chapter 3**.

2. The concepts and definitions relating to the measurement of status in employment are detailed in **Labour Statistics Concepts Sources and Methods** and are outlined briefly in this standard.

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## Underlying concepts

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### UNDERLYING CONCEPTS

#### NAME OF VARIABLE

3. The standard term for the variable is 'Status in Employment'.

4. The term 'Status in Employment' is used in international standards. The term 'Employment Status' should be avoided as it is easily confused with the concept of Labour Force Status.

#### DEFINITION OF VARIABLE

##### Nominal definition

5. Status in Employment is determined by an employed person's position in relation to their 'main' job. The Australian status in employment classification classifies job holders according to their perception of the relationship between themselves and the enterprise for which they work, together with the legal status of the enterprise where this can be established. The groups distinguished in the Australian classification are:

- employee - a person who works for a public or private employer and receives remuneration in wages, salary, a retainer fee from their employer while working on a commission basis, tips, piece-rates, or payment in kind; or a person who operates his or her own incorporated enterprise with or without hiring employees
- employer - a person who operates his or her own unincorporated economic enterprise or engages independently in a profession or trade, and hires one or more employees
- own account worker - a person who operates his or her own unincorporated economic enterprise or engages independently in a profession or trade, and hires no employees; and
- contributing family worker - a person who works without pay in an economic enterprise

operated by a relative.

6. The legal status concept is used to classify owner-managers of incorporated businesses as employees rather than as employers or own account workers, for consistency with Australian National Accounts practice. Individuals who work in their own business are queried about the legal status of the business. Although they may 'own' the business, if it is incorporated the individual is not held personally liable for the economic enterprise should it become insolvent. Those individuals who own an incorporated business, with or without hiring one or more employees, are therefore classified as employees. If the business is unincorporated (and hence the owner is liable for the economic enterprise), those who hire employees are classified as employers and those who do not are classified as own account workers.

7. Status in Employment is an attribute of the counting unit 'job'. It is collected in household surveys as an attribute of the counting unit person by reference to the main job held by the person.

### **Operational definition**

8. Status in Employment is measured by determining if a person is:

- an employee
- an employer
- an own account worker or
- a contributing family worker.

9. Collectively the last three classes (employers, own account workers and contributing family workers) may be described as the self-employed, although this is not a concept recognised in international standards or in the Labour Force Survey. The term 'Self-employed' should only be used collectively to describe employers, own account workers and contributing family workers. If it is necessary to aggregate the categories own account worker and contributing family worker then both terms should be included as an output label, that is 'Own Account and Contributing Family Workers'.

### **COMPARISON BETWEEN THE LABOUR FORCE SURVEY AND OTHER HOUSEHOLD SURVEYS**

10. The minimum question set measures the concept of status in the employment using the same module of five questions as the Labour Force Survey. If data on status in employment are not required, questions 6 to 11 of the minimum question set can be omitted.

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## **Classification and coding**

## **CLASSIFICATION AND CODING**

### **SCOPE OF THE VARIABLE**

11. The variable Status in Employment is applicable to all employed persons as defined in Labour Force Framework: Underlying Concepts.

### **THE CLASSIFICATION CRITERIA**

12. The criterion used in the classification is:

- A person's position in relation to the main employment (job) in the enterprise in which he or she works.

13. Definition of the above criterion is as follows:

- Position in relation to the main employment in the enterprise is a function of:
  - whether a person works for a public or private employer and receives remuneration; or
  - whether a person operates his/her own incorporated economic enterprise, whether or not they hire employees; or
  - whether a person operates his/her own unincorporated economic enterprise or engages independently in a profession or trade, and hires one or more employees; or
  - whether a person operates his/her own unincorporated economic enterprise or engages independently in a profession or trade and hires no employees; or
  - whether a person works in an economic enterprise operated by a relative without remuneration.

### **THE STANDARD CLASSIFICATION**

14. The standard classification is a one level classification having four categories.

- Employee
- Employer
- Own Account Worker
- Contributing Family Worker

### **THE CODE STRUCTURE**

15. The code structure of the classification is:

1. Employee
2. Employer
3. Own Account Worker
4. Contributing Family Worker



## Collection methods

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### COLLECTION METHODS

#### STANDARD QUESTION MODULE

16. Details of the full labour force survey questionnaire are presented in the **Information Paper: Questionnaires used in the Labour Force Survey, 2001** (cat. no. 6232.0) The minimum question set is detailed in The Labour Force Framework: Collection Methods. 'Labour Force Status' must first be established and status in employment is only applicable to employed persons. Additional questions relevant to measuring 'Status in Employment' are outlined below.

#### Household based surveys

17. Status in employment is determined for all employed persons. Labour force status must first be established, as defined in The Labour Force Framework: Collection Methods. Questions relevant to measuring status in employment are:

- The maximum set  
Questions 28-32 (for employed persons at work in the reference week), and Questions 47-51 (for employed persons away from work in the reference week) in the full labour force module given in **Information Paper: Questionnaires used in the Labour Force Survey, 2001** (cat. no. 6232.0).
- The minimum set  
Questions 6-11 in the shortened version determine status in employment. They are identical to the questions used in the maximum set. These questions are optional, and can be omitted if data on status in employment are not required.

#### Self enumerated surveys

18. The relevant question for self enumerated surveys is Question 2 in the self enumerated module given in The Labour Force Framework: Collection Methods.

#### Single Question Module for Administrative Data Collections

19. This question is not used by the ABS. For more information regarding its recommended use, see The Labour Force Framework: Collection Methods, paragraphs 23 and 24. The single question module does not include a check on the corporate nature of the business for those who own their own business, a crucial element for determining status in employment.

#### STANDARD INPUT CATEGORIES AND DERIVATION OF INPUT CATEGORIES

20. The input categories are derived from the answers to the relevant questions in the questionnaire module. The input categories are:

- Employee

- Employer
- Own Account Worker
- Contributing Family Worker

## The maximum set derivation rules

21. The following derivation rules are used:

1. To be coded to **EMPLOYEE** a person has to:

- Work for an employer for wages or salary (Q29 = 1 or Q30 = 09); or
- Work for an employer on a commission basis and be paid a retainer fee by their employer (Q30 = 05); or
- Work for an employer for payment in kind (Q30 = 07); or
- Work for an employer for tips or piece-rates or other remuneration (Q30 = 08 or Q30 = 10)); or
- Work in own incorporated business with employees (Q31 = 'yes' and Q32 = 'yes'); or
- Work in own incorporated business without employees (Q31 = 'no' and Q32 = 'yes').

2. To be coded to **EMPLOYER** a person has to:

- Work in own unincorporated business with employees (Q31 = 'yes' and Q32 = 'no'); or
- Work independently in a profession or trade, and hire one or more employees (Q31 = 'yes' and Q32 = 'no').

3. To be coded to **OWN ACCOUNT WORKER** a person has to:

- Work in own unincorporated business without employees (Q31 = 'no' and Q32 = 'no'); or
- Work independently in a profession or trade and hire no employees (Q31 = 'no' and Q32 = 'no').

4. To be coded to **CONTRIBUTING FAMILY WORKER** a person has to:

- Work without pay in an economic enterprise operated by a relative (Q30 = 06).

## The minimum set derivation rules

22. The derivation rules from the minimum question set are the same as for the maximum set above.

## Output

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### OUTPUT

#### STANDARD OUTPUT CATEGORIES

23. The full output categories for both the maximum and minimum set of questions are:

- Employee
- Employer
- Own Account Worker
- Contributing Family Worker

24. The following is also standard output, provided "Self-employed" is identified in the Glossary of the publication as the aggregation of the standard categories, Employer, Own Account Worker and Contributing Family Worker (see Status in Employment - Underlying Concepts, paragraph 9).

- Employee
- Self-employed

#### APPLICATION OF THE CLASSIFICATION TO OTHER VARIABLES

25. With appropriate changes to the questions asked, the classification may be used to classify the 'status in employment' of a person's other jobs, such as 'second' job, 'last' job, etc.

## Hours Worked

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- Collection methods
- Output

# Introduction

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## INTRODUCTION

1. Information on hours of work enables: classification of employed persons according to the number of hours worked; and classification of employed persons into full-time and part-time status. The general notion of hours of work encompasses a number of related concepts: usual hours worked; hours actually worked; normal hours of work; and hours paid for (including both normal hours and overtime hours). This standard discusses the concepts of actual and usual hours of work as applied in the Labour Force Survey. More detailed discussion of the concept of hours worked is available in the **Labour Statistics Concepts Sources and Methods**

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## Underlying concepts

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## UNDERLYING CONCEPTS

### NAME OF VARIABLE

2. There are two core variables which measure the concept of hours worked:

- Usual hours of work
- Actual hours of work

### DEFINITION OF VARIABLE

#### Nominal definition

Usual hours of work

3. Usual hours of work refers to a typical period, rather than to a specified reference period. The concept of usual hours applies both to persons at work and to persons temporarily absent from work, and is defined as the hours worked during a typical week or day. In the Labour Force Survey, usual hours of work refers to hours usually worked in all jobs for multiple job holders.

4. Measures of usual hours of work are available from: the Labour Force Survey; the Underemployed Workers Survey (cat. no. 6265.0), a Labour Force supplementary survey; and from various Special Supplementary Surveys, including the Survey of Employment Arrangements and Superannuation. Measures of usual hours of work are not available from

ABS business surveys.

## Actual hours worked

5. Actual hours worked (for a specific reference period) may differ from usual hours worked due to illness, vacation, strike, overtime work, a change of job or similar reasons. Actual hours of work refers to time spent at work during a specified reference week and includes:

- hours actually worked during normal periods of work;
- time spent in addition to hours worked during normal periods of work (including overtime); and
- time corresponding to short rest periods.

Excluded are:

- hours paid for but not worked such as paid annual leave, public holidays or paid sick leave;
- meal breaks; and
- time spent on travel to and from work.

6. Actual hours worked usually includes hours worked in all jobs for multiple job holders. However, the Labour Force Survey also collects a separate measure of hours actually worked in the main job for multiple job holders.

7. ABS measures of actual hours of work are consistent with international guidelines, except for time spent travelling to and from work by the self-employed, which is sometimes included in household surveys.

8. Measures of actual hours of work are available from a number of ABS household surveys: the Labour Force Survey; various labour-related supplementary topics to the Labour Force; various Special Supplementary Surveys, including the Survey of Employment Arrangements and Superannuation, and the Survey of Employment and Unemployment Patterns; and the Census of Population and Housing. Measures of actual hours of work are not available from ABS business surveys.

9. The variable hours worked is an attribute of the counting unit 'person'.

## Operational definition

10. Hours actually worked is measured by counting the total number of complete hours actually worked (including any paid or unpaid overtime less any time off) in the week preceding the survey in all jobs held by a person. Hours actually worked in main job is also collected for multiple job holders. In the Labour Force Survey, hours actually worked in the reference week are only asked of those who had a job and were at work in the reference week.

11. Hours usually worked is measured by counting the total number of complete hours usually worked (including any regular paid or unpaid overtime) per week. Usual hours worked is collected for all employed persons. For persons who had a job but were not at work during the reference week, only usual hours worked are collected.

## **COMPARISON BETWEEN THE LABOUR FORCE SURVEY AND OTHER HOUSEHOLD SURVEYS**

12. The shortened version (see the minimum set in The Labour Force Framework - Collection methods) includes only one question related to hours worked due to constraints on the length of the module and sequencing instructions. Hours usually worked each week is asked of those who had a job in the reference week, regardless of whether they were at work or away in the reference week. The 'minimum set' is mainly used in Special Supplementary Surveys and other Social and Labour collections. These collections are interested in hours worked data as a classificatory variable with the primary focus of analysis being on socio-economic well-being.

13. Actual hours worked, as measured by the maximum question set is better suited for measurement of economic activity and analysis of income/earnings as a return to labour.

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## **Classification and coding**

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### **CLASSIFICATION AND CODING**

#### **SCOPE OF THE VARIABLE**

14. The variable Hours Worked is applicable to all employed persons.

#### **THE CLASSIFICATION CRITERIA**

15. The criteria used to classify units in the classification is 'complete hours worked'. Fractions of an hour are disregarded.

#### **THE STANDARD CLASSIFICATION**

16. 'Hours Worked' is a flat classification having only one level with 99 categories.

17. The standard input classification is complete hours from 1 to 99 and over. A separate code structure is used for persons working less than one or no hours.

#### **THE CODE STRUCTURE**

18. The code structure is 1 to 99 hours with a separate response for less than 1 or no hours

2	2 hours
3	3 hours
4	4 hours
...	.....
99	99 hours and over

A separate code structure is used for persons working less than 1 or no hours

0	works 1 hour or more
1	worked less than 1 or no hours.

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## Collection methods

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### COLLECTION METHODS

#### STANDARD QUESTION MODULE

19. It must first be established that the person is 'Employed' (see Labour Force Status - Collection Methods). 'Hours worked' is then determined by asking, as appropriate, the questions 'Hours actually worked last week' and 'Hours usually worked each week'.

#### Household based surveys

20 . Hours worked is determined for all employed persons. Labour force status must first be established, as defined in Labour Force Status - Collection Methods. Questions relevant to measuring hours worked are:

- The maximum set  
Question 38 (hours actually worked last week in main job, for multiple job holders); Question 39 (hours actually worked last week, (in all jobs)); Question 40 or Question 42 or Question 59, as appropriate, (hours usually worked each week (in all jobs)).
- The minimum set  
Hours Actually Worked Last Week is not collected in the shortened version.

Hours Usually Worked Each Week is collected in Question 12 (see The Labour Force Framework - Collection Methods, for all questions in the minimum set).

#### Self enumerated surveys

21. Hours worked last week (in all jobs) is collected in Question 3 from the full self enumerated module (see The Labour Force Framework - Collection Methods for all questions in the self-enumerated module). There is no question in the self enumerated module for hours usually worked each week.

**STANDARD INPUT CATEGORIES**

22. The standard input categories for 'Hours Worked' are complete hours.

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**Output**

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**OUTPUT**

**STANDARD OUTPUT CATEGORIES**

23. Where the information is collected in sufficient detail, the standard output categories are:

- less than 1 hour/no hours
- 1 - 15 hours
- 16 - 24 hours
- 25 - 34 hours
- 35 - 39 hours
- 40 hours
- 41 - 48 hours
- 49 hours and over

24. However, these categories can be fully aggregated to:

- <1hour/0 hours
- 1 - 34 hours
- 35 hours and over

25. Labour Force suggest a two-tiered approach to output with 9 major categories and further sub-categories (indented) to enable breakdown into 5 hour groups. Relevant categories could be used depending on the availability and quality of the data.

Suggested standard output categories for Labour Force data:

- 0 hours
- 1 - 15 hours
- 1 - 5 hours



6 - 10 hours  
11 - 15 hours  
16 - 29 hours  
16 - 20 hours  
21 - 24 hours  
25 - 29 hours  
30 - 34 hours  
35 - 39 hours  
40 hours  
41 - 44 hours  
45 - 49 hours  
50 hours and over  
50 - 54 hours  
55 - 59 hours  
60 - 64 hours  
65 hours and over

## **APPLICATION OF THE CLASSIFICATION TO OTHER VARIABLES**

26. The classification's prime aim is to determine the number of hours worked in all jobs. However, it is also used to derive the variables 'Full-time/Part-time Status'.

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## **Full-Time/Part-Time Status**

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## **Introduction**

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1. 'Full-time/part-time status' is widely used to categorise persons or jobs in terms of the number of hours worked, or usually worked. This status is of interest in understanding the nature of employment, particularly when cross-classified with socio-economic characteristics.

2. Full-time/part-time status is available from a number of ABS household surveys, including: the monthly Labour Force Survey; various labour-related supplementary topics; various Special Supplementary Surveys, including the Survey of Employment Arrangements and Superannuation, and the Survey of Employment and Unemployment Patterns; and the

Census of Population and Housing. Full-time/part-time status is also used in some ABS business surveys, including: the Survey of Employee Earnings and Hours and the Survey of Average Weekly Earnings.

3. Most ABS household surveys, including the Labour Force Survey, define full-time/part-time status of employed persons in terms of hours worked (in all jobs). In some cases, a subjective approach based on respondents' perception of their full-time or part-time status is used. This approach is most often used where information is sought about work that is not currently being undertaken, and where recall problems may be encountered using a more objective approach. A subjective approach is used to determine whether unemployed persons are looking for full-time or part-time work.

4. ABS business surveys classify employee jobs, rather than persons, as full-time or part-time. Classification of employee jobs as full-time is based on whether the usual hours worked are equal to, or greater than, what has been agreed to as being full-time under the relevant award or agreement (i.e. normal hours). If there are no agreed or award hours associated with the job, then it is classified on the basis of usual hours worked. The job is classified as full-time if the usual hours of work per week are 35 or more. Part-time jobs are those not defined as full-time. This standard does not cover data on full-time/part-time status collected in ABS business surveys.

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## **Underlying concepts**

## UNDERLYING CONCEPTS

### NAME OF VARIABLE

5. The standard term for the variable is 'Full-time/Part-time Status'.

### DEFINITION OF VARIABLE

#### Nominal definition

6. The definition used in the Labour Force Survey designates full-time workers as persons who:

- usually work 35 hours or more per week in all jobs; or
- although usually working less than 35 hours a week, actually worked 35 hours or more during the reference week.

7. The Labour Force Survey defines part-time workers as persons who:

- usually work less than 35 hours per week and either did so during the reference week, or were not at work in the reference week.

8. 'Full-time/Part-time Status' is an attribute of the counting unit 'person'.

#### Operational definition

9. Where the **maximum** Labour Force set is in use, for employed persons full-time/part-time status is measured by counting the total number of hours actually worked in all jobs in the reference week for people at work, and hours usually worked per week in all jobs for persons not at work in the reference week.

10. For unemployed persons, full-time/part-time status is determined subjectively, according to respondent's perception of whether full-time or part-time work was being sought over the last four weeks.

11. Where the **minimum** Labour Force set is in use, for employed persons full-time/part-time status is measured by counting the total number of hours usually worked per week in all jobs. Persons usually working part-time, who actually worked full-time hours in the reference week, are excluded from the measure derived from the minimum question set. These people are counted as part-time workers when the minimum question set is used.

12. A subjective measure of whether unemployed persons are seeking full-time work or part-time work is also available from the minimum question set.

## COMPARISON BETWEEN THE LABOUR FORCE SURVEY AND OTHER HOUSEHOLD SURVEYS

13. In comparison with the estimates of full-time/part-time status from the Labour Force

Survey, the reduced questionnaire module results in lower estimates of full-time workers, and higher estimates of part-time workers. As mentioned above, this is because the reduced question set does not include persons who usually work part-time, but who actually worked full-time in the reference week in the estimate of full-time workers.

14. Usual hours worked is used in the short question module because it can be meaningfully asked of all employed persons, whether or not they are at work during the reference week. Asking only one question for hours worked minimises the size of the question set and avoids complex sequencing.

15. Full-time/Part-time Status of unemployed persons is determined by self perception of whether they are looking for full-time or part-time work in both the maximum and minimum question sets, so estimates derived from either question set would be comparable.

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## **Classification and coding**

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### **SCOPE OF THE VARIABLE**

16. The variable Full-time/Part-time Status is applicable to all persons in the labour force.

### **THE CLASSIFICATION CRITERIA**

17. The criteria used in classifying units in the classification are 'actual' hours worked in all jobs last week or 'usual' hours worked in all jobs (for those not at work in the reference week) for employed persons. For unemployed person the criteria used in classifying units are whether the person is 'looking for full-time work' or 'looking for part-time work' .

### **THE STANDARD CLASSIFICATION**

18. 'Full-time/Part-time Status' is a flat classification with two categories for employed persons:

- Full-time
- Part-time

19. For unemployed persons the two categories for classification are:

- Looking for full-time work
- Looking for part-time work

### **THE CODE STRUCTURE**

20. The standard code structure is:

1. Full-time
2. Part-time

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## Collection methods

[Contents >> Full-Time/Part-Time Status >> Collection methods](#)

### STANDARD QUESTION MODULE

21. 'Labour Force Status' must first be established (see Labour Force Status - Collection Methods). For employed persons, 'Hours worked' is then determined by asking, as appropriate, the questions 'Hours actually worked last week' and/or 'Hours usually worked each week'. 'Full-time/Part-time status' of employed persons is derived from 'Hours worked'. For unemployed persons, questions are asked to determine if the person had been looking for full-time or part-time work in the last 4 weeks.

### Household based surveys

22. The questions relevant to measuring full-time/part-time status in household based surveys are:

- **The maximum set:**

For employed persons: Question 39 (for persons who were at work in the reference week, or Question 59 (for employed persons away from work in the reference week).  
For unemployed persons: Question 22-23, or 73-74.

The maximum set is available in **Information Paper: Questionnaires used in the Labour Force Survey, 2001** (cat. no. 6232.0).

- **The minimum set:**

Derived for employed persons from question 12, and from question 13 for unemployed persons.

### Self enumerated surveys

23. The relevant questions for self enumerated surveys are question 3 (for employed persons) and question 4 (for unemployed persons) in the self enumerated module.

### Single question module for administrative data collections

24. This question is not used by the ABS. For more information regarding its recommended use, see The Labour Force Framework, Collection Methods, paragraphs 23 and 24.

### STANDARD INPUT CATEGORIES

25. The input categories are derived from the answers to the relevant questions in the questionnaire module and are the same for both the maximum set and the minimum set.

The input categories are:

- Full-time Status
- Part-time Status

26. The following derivation rules are used:

#### **The maximum Labour Force set**

To be coded to FULL-TIME STATUS an employed person has to:

- usually work 35 hours per week in all jobs; or usually work less than 35 hours but actually work 35 hours or more in the reference week.

For an unemployed person to be coded as looking for full-time work, the person has to:

- report that they had looked for full-time work in the four weeks to the end of the reference week.

To be coded to PART-TIME STATUS an employed person has to:

- usually work 1-34 hours per week in all jobs and actually work 1-34 hours or be away from work in the reference week.

For an unemployed person to be coded as looking for part-time work, the person has to:

- report that they had looked for part-time work only in the four weeks to the end of the reference week.

#### **The minimum Labour Force set**

To be coded to FULL-TIME STATUS an employed person has to:

- usually work 35 hours per week in all jobs in Question 12;

For an unemployed person to be coded as looking for full-time work, the person has to:

- report that they had been looking for full-time work in Question 13.

To be coded to PART-TIME STATUS an employed person has to:

- usually work 1-34 hours per week in all jobs in Question 12;

For an unemployed person to be coded as looking for part-time work, the person has to

- report that they had been looking for part-time work in Question 13.

27. The standard input for 'hours worked' and for 'hours usually worked per week' are complete hours.

# Output

Contents >> Full-Time/Part-Time Status >> Output

## Standard output categories

32. The output categories are derived from input categories which identify whether a person has Full-time or Part-time Status.

33. Note that Full-time/Part-time Status is never output on its own as it is always output in relation to Labour Force Status:

- Employed
  - Working Full-time
  - Working Part-time
- Unemployed
  - Looking for Full-time work
  - Looking for Part-time work
- Not in the Labour Force

34. It is also standard to combine Labour Force Status, Status in Employment and Full-time/Part-time Status output categories as follows:

- Employed
  - Employee
    - Working Full-time
    - Working Part-time
  - Self-employed
- Unemployed
- Not in the Labour Force

35. It should be noted that if the term "Self-employed" is used, it needs to be identified in the Glossary of the publication as the aggregation of the standard categories: Employer, Own Account Worker and Contributing Family Worker from Status in Employment. Also note that "Looking for Full-time work" and "Looking for Part-time work" are not necessarily required to qualify the category "Unemployed".

## Supporting variables

36. The variables needed to derive 'Full-time/Part-time Status' are 'Labour Force Status' and 'usual hours worked per week' and 'actual hours worked per week', where asked.

## Duration of Unemployment

[Contents >> Duration of Unemployment](#)

This section contains the following subsection :

- Introduction
- Underlying concepts
- Classification and coding
- Collection methods
- Output

## Introduction

[Contents >> Duration of Unemployment >> Introduction](#)

1. Since its inception in 1960, the ABS Labour Force Survey has collected information about duration of unemployment for unemployed persons. In its current form, the survey collects data each month about the length, in completed weeks, of current (incomplete) spells of unemployment from those who are currently unemployed. Annual supplementary surveys collect data about the number of spells and total duration spent looking for work in the past year.

2. The definition of duration of employment was revised in the Labour Force Survey in April 2001. Prior to this date, duration of unemployment was defined in the Labour Force Survey as the period of time from when an unemployed person began looking for work, until the end of the reference week; or the period of time since an unemployed person last worked **full-time** for two weeks or more, until the end of the reference week; whichever was the shorter. The revised definition retained the two criteria, but the second criterion was revised to reference the period of time since a person last worked in **any** job for two weeks or more, regardless of whether it was full-time or part-time.

3. Duration of unemployment is important as both an economic and social indicator. In periods of high and increasing unemployment, changes in median and mean duration of unemployment and in the proportion of person unemployed for longer periods (long-term unemployed) are key indicators of changes in the employment market. Long-term unemployment (i.e. unemployed for 52 weeks or more) is of particular social concern due to the consequences of being out of work for long periods, such as financial hardship and loss of relevant skills.



# Underlying concepts

[Contents](#) >> [Duration of Unemployment](#) >> Underlying concepts

## NAME OF VARIABLE

4. The name of the variable is 'Duration of Unemployment'.

## DEFINITION OF VARIABLE

### Nominal definition

5. 'Duration of Unemployment' is defined as the elapsed period to the end of the reference week since the time a person began looking for work, or since a person last worked for two weeks or more, whichever is the shorter. Long term unemployment refers to persons unemployed for a period of 52 weeks or more.

6. The measure is of current (and continuing) periods of unemployment rather than completed spells.

7. For persons currently unemployed who may have begun looking for work while still employed, the duration of unemployment is defined as the period from the time the person last worked for two weeks or more to the end of the reference week.

8. 'Duration of Unemployment' is an attribute of the counting unit 'person'.

### Operational definition

9. 'Duration of Unemployment' is measured in completed weeks and is calculated according to the following rules:

10. After a person has been identified as Unemployed the duration of unemployment is calculated by:

- Obtaining the date the person began looking for work and calculating the number of weeks between that date and the end of the reference week.
- Obtaining the date the person last worked for two weeks or more in the last 2 years and calculating the number of weeks between that date and the end of the reference week.
- Comparing the time periods and taking the shortest of the two as the 'Duration of Unemployment'

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# Classification and coding

[Contents](#) >> [Duration of Unemployment](#) >> Classification and coding

## THE CLASSIFICATION CRITERIA

11. The criteria used in classifying units in the classification is completed weeks.

## **THE STANDARD CLASSIFICATION**

12. The standard classification is a flat classification:

- Under 2 weeks
- 2 weeks and under 4 weeks
- 4 weeks and under 8 weeks
- 8 weeks and under 13 weeks
- 13 weeks and under 26 weeks
- 26 weeks and under 39 weeks
- 39 weeks and under 52 weeks
- 52 weeks and under 65 weeks
- 65 weeks and under 78 weeks
- 78 weeks and under 91 weeks
- 91 weeks and under 104 weeks
- 104 weeks and over

All data are converted to and stored in whole weeks for any duration of unemployment. (N.B. less specific dates are collected for longer durations so the weeks' calculation get 'grainier'. Durations of less than 2 years are converted to weeks from a specific date dd/mm/yy. Durations of 2 years to less than 5 years are converted to weeks from mm/yy and durations of 5 years or more ago are converted to weeks from yy only)

## **THE CODE STRUCTURE**

13. The code structure of the classification is:

1	Under 2 weeks
2	2 weeks and under 4 weeks
3	4 weeks and under 8 weeks
4	8 weeks and under 13 weeks
5	13 weeks and under 26 weeks
6	26 weeks and under 39 weeks
7	39 weeks and under 52 weeks
8	52 weeks and under 65 weeks
9	65 weeks and under 78 weeks
10	78 weeks and under 91 weeks
11	91 weeks and under 104 weeks
12	104 weeks and over

All data are converted to and stored in whole weeks for any duration of unemployment. (N.B. less specific dates are collected for longer durations so the weeks' calculation get 'grainier'. Durations of less than 2 years are converted to weeks from a specific date dd/mm/yy. Durations of 2 years to less than 5 years are converted to weeks from mm/yy and durations of 5 years or more ago are converted to weeks from yy only)

## **SCOPE OF THE VARIABLE**

14. The variable Duration of Unemployment is applicable to all unemployed persons. For definition of 'unemployed' see paragraph 9 of Labour Force Framework, Underlying Concepts.

# Collection methods

Contents >> Duration of Unemployment >> Collection methods

## STANDARD QUESTION MODULE

15. It must be determined that the person's Labour Force Status is 'unemployed'.

### Household based surveys

16. Additional questions relevant to measuring 'Duration of Unemployment' in Household surveys are:

- **The maximum set**  
Questions 85 and 86 are required to measure 'Duration of Unemployment' (after establishing a labour force status of unemployed) in the full Labour Force Module. This module is available in the **Information paper: Questionnaires used in the Labour Force Survey, Australia**, (cat.no. 6232.0) (available in A Directory of Concepts and Standards for Social, Labour and Demographic Statistics).
- **The minimum set**  
Questions 16 and 17 (only for persons with a labour force status of unemployed).

Q.16.WHEN DID ... BEGIN LOOKING FOR WORK?

Enter Date

Less than 2 years ago

2 years or more ago

5 years or more ago

Did not look for work

...../...../.....

DD MM YY

...../.....

MM YY

.....

YY

q

---

Q.17.WHEN DID ... LAST WORK FOR TWO WEEKS OR MORE?

Enter Date

Less than 2 years ago

2 years or more ago

5 years or more ago

Has never worked (for two weeks or more)

...../...../.....

DD MM YY

...../.....

MM YY

.....

YY

q

No More Questions

---

### Self enumerated surveys

17. Currently there is no proposal for establishing 'Duration of Unemployment' from the self enumerated module.

## STANDARD INPUT CATEGORIES

18. All data are converted to and stored in whole weeks for any duration of unemployment.

(N.B. less specific dates are collected for longer durations so the weeks' calculations get 'grainier'. Durations of less than 2 years are converted to weeks from a specific date dd/mm/yy. Durations of 2 years to less than 5 years are converted to weeks from mm/yy and durations of 5 years or more ago are converted to weeks from yy only).

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## Output

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### STANDARD OUTPUT CATEGORIES

19. The standard output categories are:

- Under 2 weeks
- 2 weeks and under 4 weeks
- 4 weeks and under 8 weeks
- 8 weeks and under 13 weeks
- 13 weeks and under 26 weeks
- 26 weeks and under 52 weeks
- 52 weeks and under 104 weeks
- 104 weeks and over

This can be aggregated to:

- Under 4 weeks
- 4 weeks and under 13 weeks
- 13 weeks and under 26 weeks
- 26 weeks and under 52 weeks
- 52 weeks and over ([long term unemployed subtotal](#))
  - 52 weeks and under 104 weeks
  - 104 weeks and over

Or

- Under 52 weeks and
- 52 weeks and over (with those unemployed for 52 weeks and over representing the long-term unemployed)

The standard detailed output classification beyond 104 weeks is:

- 104 weeks and under 3 years
- 3 years and under 4 years
- 4 years and under 5 years
- 5 years and over

### SUPPORTING VARIABLES

20. The variable needed to derive 'Duration of Unemployment' is 'Labour Force Status'

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